

The Smart Girl's Guide to Surviving Deployment



Straight-shootin'
advice, on deployment
just for you...

A “seasoned” military spouse once wrote, “My momma, a military wife for 23 years herself, gives the best advice. As a lady of the South, she also gives advice that’s memorable. During one of my Marine’s first deployments I called my mom in tears. ‘I can’t do this. It’s so much harder than I thought it would be,’ I sobbed. She flat out said, ‘Put on your big girl panties. Go clean your house and mind your babies.’ How did she know my house looked like the inside of my head? She knew it was time to pull it together and get on with it.”

I have a friend, who used to teach the Deployment section for the L.I.N.K.S. Workshop, that teasingly likes to say, when talking about deployment, “Suck it up, Cupcake.” :) And while we all have those moments when we need to have a good cry, the truth is, sometimes we just need to forge ahead and think ourselves into feeling better about this whole deployment thing.

This guide is a collection of some great tips and advice collected from a variety of sources. These are the things the briefs and “official” manuals might not mention. It’s organized by the emotional states (the emotional cycles of deployment) we experience because, let’s be honest, our feelings can sometimes determine what kind of day it’s going to be.

If you had a Southern mother, this guide is exactly what she’d tell you. It has been pieced together from various sources: my own experiences, other deployment guides, other military spouses and helpful websites. In addition, there are changes in this year’s addition to the guide that weren’t in last years. So be sure you read through the whole thing! Before we get started, here is something really important to remember! The timelines in the guide are approximate. The “cycles” of deployment can be much shorter, earlier or later. Or you may find yourself come in and out of them before finally moving to the next stage. Every person and deployment is different.

When you’re having a rough day, especially during a deployment, every Southern Mama would agree a phone call to someone who understands, and some home cooked food can fix anything. Here’s both for easy reference:

You Family Readiness Officer:	Elaina Avalos
Work Number:	760-830-6788
Mobile Number	760-583-2431
Email Address:	elaina.avalos@usmc.mil
Website	http://www.3maw.usmc.mil/external/3dmaw/macg38/vmu1/

Momma’s Homemade Mac ‘n Cheese

- 1 1/2 cups uncooked elbow macaroni**
- 2 tablespoons butter**
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- 1/4 cup milk**
- 1 cup half-and-half (you can substitute milk)**
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika (optional)**
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper**
- 2 1/2 cups shredded cheddar cheese, divided**
- salt**

Preheat oven to 350°. Cook macaroni in boiling salted water according to package directions; drain well and set aside. Meanwhile, melt butter in a medium saucepan over low heat. Blend in flour, stirring constantly, until smooth and bubbly. Gradually stir in milk and half-and-half. Cook, stirring constantly, until mixture boils and thickens, about 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from heat and add paprika, pepper, and 2 cups of the cheese; stir until cheese is melted and sauce is smooth. Combine sauce with the macaroni and add salt to taste. Place in a buttered 1 1/2-quart casserole dish. garnish top with remaining 1/2 cup of cheese and dot with additional butter. Bake 25 to 30 minutes. Serves 4 to 6.



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I'm Pretty Much Freaking Out Right About Now!

Pre-Deployment: Anticipating Loss (6 – 8 weeks before departure)



Getting ready for a deployment isn't all that different from having dental work performed: it has to be done (on a regular basis), most people don't look forward to the appointment date, and anticipating it is always worse than doing it.

Even though we know deployment is part of military life, how many of us were thinking about THAT as we walked down the aisle? Most Marines don't meet their brides at the altar wearing flak gear, holding an M-16 and Seabag.

I used to think that it would get easier with every deployment, but each deployment has its own personality and character with its own unique challenges and victories. It's still tough to be separated. For those with kids, it's tough to be a single parent. And it's tough to adjust for all of us when they get back. I can honestly say that the most difficult part for me is the "pre." Tensions build and tempers flare, especially during the constant in and out of work-ups.

It's not uncommon to:

- Cry about stupid stuff
- Argue with your Marine about stupid stuff
- Try to fix a whole bunch of stupid stuff around the house
- Make endless, stupid lists about all the things that must be done immediately
- Stay mad about stupid stuff so you can avoid having sex
- Panicking that the stupid stuff is actually big stuff and you'll have to deal with ALL of it the minute your Marine leaves

If you feel like a basket case, it's probably because you ARE a basket case. But seriously though, the person you love is leaving, for an extended period of time, to a combat zone. Those are freak-out worthy circumstances. Marines get paid to not freak out under serious stress, and they do it by:

- Preparing their gear
- Training to respond, not react
- Checking off stuff on lots of lists and spreadsheets

What works for your Marine can also work for you: get your house prepared, get your **ICE (In Case of Emergency)** plan prepared, and make or print out lists to check off. *Organization is your friend.* You can't control the cards you're dealt, but you can change the way you play them.

The Pre-Deployment Checklist - Short Version

For a more detailed, thorough checklist that includes tracking all your important documentation and taking care of the family vehicles, see Appendix A (p. 29)

With your Marine's help, take care of:

- Legal Stuff/ Squadron paperwork**
 - o Power of Attorney & Wills
 - o ID Cards/ DEERS updated
 - o Copies of deployment orders
 - o RED (Record of Emergency Data) correct
 - o CACO (Casualty Affairs Calls Officer) paperwork
- Financial Stuff**
 - o How to access his/her LES online
 - o Insurance (SGLI & separate policies) updated
 - o Set up online banking, if available, with auto bill-pay
 - o Make plans for the extra pay that will come in
- Communication Plan**
 - o Discuss how often you'll email/ write letters/ try to call
 - o Make expectations clear on both sides
 - o Brainstorm other means of communication: home videos, care packages, video conferencing, etc.
 - o Plan ahead for special occasions your Marine will miss (buy cards, wrap gifts, order flowers, etc.)
- House Stuff**
 - o Go over location of all important documents
 - o Make plans for who to call if a home repair problem comes up
- Car Stuff**
 - o See separate auto list
- Post on your fridge:**
 - o Support System Plans (a list of important phone numbers, including your Family Readiness Officer, close friends & family members, babysitters, church resources, etc.)
 - o Emergency Medical information/ Family Care Plan for Children (see p. 7)
 - Each family member's important medical info
 - Where to go in case of a medical emergency
 - Info on the kids' daily schedule/routines in case YOU have the medical emergency & someone needs to take your kiddos





Prepping the Kids...

Waiting until the day before your Marine leaves to prep the kids is a really bad idea. On the other hand, making every family event the last swan song for months ahead isn't healthy either. It's important to plan for some ways to stay emotionally connected, but kids also need to know what's expected of them.

About a month before D-day (departure day or deployment day) is a good time frame to start prepping your kids. You'll probably need to gently assist your Marine with some of the ideas or rituals you'd like to include. It's not that Marines aren't capable of focusing on family stuff, but their time and energy is focused on preparing to deploy. Talk with your Marine about family rituals you want to continue in their absence, and any special things you want to do, like some of the cool things on this list.



Go over the "house rules." Explain that just because one parent will be away the rules aren't going to change. The "Rah-rah Go Team" pep talk may work better than threats.

Assign each kid specific jobs to take care of during the deployment. Not only does this help the stay-home parent immensely, but it also helps the kids feel important & responsible.

Mark on a map or globe where your Marine will be located, unless the information is classified. Mark the locations of family in other parts of the world, too.

Make tapes of your Marine reading your children's favorite storybooks.

United thru Reading (ask me, your FRO) is a great way to do this but you can also record your Marine reading at home.

Ask your children for a special keepsake to give to their mom/dad to take on the deployment. Have your Marine take photos of the keepsake in places on the ship, on base, etc & email them home when possible (Like Flat Stanley <http://flatterworld.com/about.php?nav=about>).

Give your children a photograph of your Marine in a special frame to keep near their beds. This may require regular use of Windex if your kids "kiss" mommy or daddy goodnight before they go to bed. :)

Agree on a phrase you will each say before going to sleep. Ours was "the same stars are smiling on us tonight." No need to explain to little ones that it's actually daytime for your Marine when you're going to bed in California.

Have your Marine give the family a scrapbook or a special box to hold letters, drawings, and other souvenirs they send home. When your Marine gets home (s)he can tell stories about the things they sent.

Have your Marine hide small gifts or notes throughout your home, and jot down the location of each item. Every few weeks during your deployment, your Marine can send home a treasure map or clue to guide the kids to one of the items. Alternatively, skip the clues and let the treasures turn up on their own as cool surprises! Only your Marine will know how many are left and can keep you guessing.

Have your children help your Marine pack, if there's time. This will help them think and talk about the deployment and ask questions they may be wondering about.

Make a flat daddy/ flat mommy or daddy doll. We had so much fun with these, and I can't recommend them enough! The gate guards especially get a kick out of them if they ride in your car with you; just don't try to scam the HOV lane on the freeways! Or try a daddy doll for the little ones.

www.flatdaddies.com

www.hugahero.com

Do some fun family activities together, take lots of pictures and then make two scrapbooks: one to go with your Marine & one to stay home with the family. If you're too busy during the pre-deployment period, you can always upload your photos online & have photobooks printed pretty cheaply. Try Shutterfly or Snapfish.

Order the "Talk, Listen Connect" Sesame Street DVD and watch it as a family. It's free to order or download at <http://www.sesameworkshop.org/tlc/>. If you choose to order it, you'll be redirected to www.militaryonesource.com. Additionally, the Department of Defense has teamed up with Sesame Street for an interactive website that is an excellent resource for those Marines who are deploying/deployed and their family members, especially children. Please take a few minutes to check it out. www.sesamestreetfamilyconnections.org. You can also get a copy from the FRO.

Put your Marine's name on the prayer list at your place of worship. This will give your family and the entire community the opportunity to pray for your Marine, and all our service members.



Do you have a Family Care Plan for Children? (See Appendix C)

What would happen if you were unable to care for your children (including furry, four legged ones) while your Marine is deployed? We're not talking about going out to a chick flick for a few hours. What would happen if you were injured and/or hospitalized?

A Family Care Plan details who can and will take care of your children in emergency circumstances. A few pages detailing your children's routines, needs and schedules should be easy to access (posted on the fridge, in your car's glove box, the diaper bag, etc.) as well as a list of phone contacts.

Your Plan should also include a Special Power of Attorney authorizing care; consider making two POA's for a local family who can keep your children and for an out-of town relative who could come in an emergency. The POA does NOT transfer custody; it just authorizes the people you designate to make medical and school decisions if you're unable to do so. Your Marine's admin shop (the S-1) and/or base legal should be able to assist you with the paperwork.

Where Can I Hide?

Pre-Deployment: Detachment and Withdrawal (Week before deployment)



It's the week we all dread! The days seem to drag until we finally put our Marines on that white bus. You feel like your house is ready to burst at the seams because the stress level is so high. How is it that you're ready to throttle your Marine when you won't see them for months on end? It's because it's so much easier to say good-bye when you're grouchy or mad at your Marine.



It's *totally* normal to:

- Feel like your marriage is in the toilet
- Feel lonely even though your Marine is still home (sort of)
- Feel a total lack of energy to do anything
- Want to strangle or scream at your Marine
- Have difficulty having sex because it's what you're "supposed" to do, not what you want to do
- Experience drastic changes in communication

Your Marine is probably busy at work, making final preparations, and exhausted when he gets home. You're sad and already feeling lonely. Oh happy days, right? From spouses who have survived "D-Day" (and yes, you will survive it), here are some of the best suggestions:

"Draw a box" around the week before and week after D-Day. Plan to just lay low and try not to schedule much, if anything.

Expect your Marine to check, check and re-check their gear. It's their way of coping with getting ready to depart. You may have a separate room in your house where all this gear lives. But if you're not lucky enough for that, expect to trip over it and live with it while your Marine prepares to leave. Just settle it in your mind now . . . your Marine is being "normal" with all this attention to his gear. Just like your annoyance that he spends more time checking his gear than he does having romantic conversations with you is "normal."

Go on a special date with your Marine before he departs. Dress up, go out & get romantic, or stay in and . . . get romantic. If getting intimate feels awkward or forced, try giving massages to each other or taking a shower together to relax. Crying before, during or after sex is OK, too.

Not having a lot of sex is OK. Your Marine may not be in the mood much, either. Try in some way though to make time for intimacy in some form because failing to make time can cause you to regret it later.

D-day will be stressful and busy; try to take deep breaths before you say something snarky. It can be a long day, especially if you have the kids with you. But if you're snarky and snippy, you'll replay every minute of it in your head after your Marine leaves.

Be flexible with the good-bye's. Everybody has this romantic notion of watching the bus pull away and waving handkerchiefs. Sometimes it takes HOURS for the Marines to get going. If the kids are getting squirrely and your emotions are weary, don't feel obligated to linger until the sun sets. Consider discussing beforehand a plan for those departures that get delayed. It really is okay to decide NOT to watch that bus pull away. I have yet to watch a departure. I just spoke to another FRO recently who had not seen her Marine depart until she became a FRO. Decide what works best for you and your family.

I've completely lost my schnizzle (Fo shizzle)



During Deployment: Emotional Disorganization (One to six weeks at start of deployment)

Coming home to a Marine-less house on D-day, and climbing into an empty bed is surreal, depressing and let's face it, Lifetime Channel worthy. You may not be able to hold back the tears in front of the kids — even though you intend to. Don't be too hard on yourself. Your family has just given up, for seven months or longer, a piece of its heart!

Most of us do feel incredibly sad and alone those first couple of days. Why pretend? It's true. Those first couple of days can be quite hard. On the other hand . . . the first few days may be a guilty relief. I know what you're thinking, "Say what?!"

Think about it, you've just spent the previous week or more dealing with the tension and stress of departure and now all of the sudden, there's no more gear all over the place, you don't have to cook dinner, you totally dig having the whole bed, the remote control, the schedule and the fridge all to yourself. All the tension from the "pre" days is finally gone. If you're feeling a little happy that your Marine is finally on his (or her) way, you're not alone.

Which brings me to my next point . . . deployment can make a girl feel a little emotionally crazy. One minute, you're happy to have 24 hr HGTV or Lifetime Television fests. And frankly, Cap'n Crunch for dinner is clearly the dinner of rock star Marine wives. And then within minutes or hours, your crying your eyes out because he's gone. Like the guide said earlier, if you feel like you're a basket case, it's because you are. ;) But don't worry, you're a perfectly normal basket case.

It's totally normal to:

- Feel relieved the departure is finally over, and then feel guilty because you're happy(ish)
- Feel numb and a little aimless
- Feel a need or desire to isolate, not pick up the phone, and eat a lot of ice cream
- Be wide awake at night even though you're exhausted
- Be aggravated at the entire Marine Corps
- Freak out because you feel like you didn't do enough to prepare
- Be completely irritated at everything your kids do and say (probably due to the lack of sleep)
- Feel guilty that you weren't the perfect, patriotic, sex-crazed spouse you think you should have been before your Marine departed

That said, "normal" feelings shouldn't include a desire to harm yourself or your children (or anybody who works for the Marine Corps). There's a big difference between feeling discouraged and feeling depressed. Discouragement can be handled as an inside job, in your own house, heart, and head. Depression needs to be handled, and treated, by professionals. If you have five or more of these symptoms: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/depression/DS00175/DSECTION=symptoms> for more than two weeks, contact your healthcare provider as soon as possible.



When will that phone ring?



Sometimes our Marines are Fed-Ex'ed to their destination and arrive quickly. Sometimes they take the slow boat, literally. But before you have time to restock your Kleenex supply or get your next batch of chick movies from Netflix, the first call arrives.

You'll get a shout out from a faraway phone booth. However short and scratchy it may be, try to keep in mind:

- Sometimes calls come in the middle of the night, even though our Marines try their best to adjust for the time difference. They don't know when they'll get a free minute to call or an open phone. Said middle-of-the-night calls will scare the pee out of you. Inevitably, you've finally, mercifully fallen into the sleep of the dead five minutes before the interruption.
- Your Marine may sound like they're talking over a World War II field phone. If (s)he pauses for breath, don't take it as a cue to start talking. The delay can be maddening.
- Calls may be short and kind of business-like, depending on how much privacy your Marine *doesn't* have. So, if you comment on missing his hot body, he'll probably respond with silence or some other awkward response. Don't take it personally and don't give him a hard time. He likely has a bunch of people listening to him!
- If your Marine didn't leave with phone cards, they can usually be purchased at their teeny, tiny base exchange. If you send phone cards, buy them on base. The AT&T international phone cards work on most forward operating bases.
- If you can, make a phone call "date" and be on time. This shows the Marine how much they're loved and appreciated. Fill them in on events from home and let them know that they're missed. *Before* the call, make a list of interesting topics so you don't forget anything.

Be Understanding and Trusting

- There may be times when your Marine can't call, e-mail or write, so be understanding and accepting. If s/he doesn't call at the designated time, there's probably a valid reason.
- Trust is also important, so make sure it goes both ways. Be loyal to the Marine's cause and faithful to the relationship for a more rewarding long-term romance.
- After your Marine returns home, all the mail, e-mail, phone calls, pictures, videos, care packages, and understanding will make the homecoming that much sweeter. The romance that was kept alive during deployment will be deeper than ever.



What do I do when I'm done crying?



When you feel like you've filled your last Kleenex, what comes next? It's tempting to want to isolate yourself for the duration of the deployment. It may also be tempting to numb whatever you're feeling with medication, alcohol or, much worse, a combination of the two. While you may get temporary relief, they only treat the symptoms, not the problem. Some spouses feel better if they can kvetch with another spouse. Sometimes misery does love company. For other families, hanging out with civilian friends and not dwelling on the departure may help more. I like a combination of the two, followed by a Girl Scout cookie chaser.

If you haven't found a professional counselor before D-day, these first few weeks are a good time to start looking, even if you don't feel seriously depressed. Talking, especially to someone who is neutral (and professionally trained) is one of the best ways to decompress. Counselors are mostly paid to be sounding boards, but they usually can offer great suggestions to help you deal with specific issues. Kids can also benefit from talking to someone. If you're not sure where to start, try:

- Your chaplain: Chaplain Melanie Miller ° 760-830-4945 ° melanie.miller1@usmc.mil
- MCCS Counseling Services ° Bldg 1438 ° 760-830-6345
- The FOCUS Project° Bldg 1551 ° 760-830-3817— Though FOCUS is meant for the whole family, utilizing it while your Marine or Sailor is deployed can be a huge help in providing you with the tools to do deployments well.
- www.militaryonesource.com (or call 1-800-342-9647) - OneSource has telephone, online and in person counseling options available. They offer six, free counseling sessions per issue. What does "per issue" mean? Good question! If you see a counselor due to deployment issues — you get six free sessions for deployment. If you later feel like you have a need for counseling due to an event in your past — you get six free counseling sessions. If you want counseling for your marriage . . . guess what? You get—you get the point!
- TRICARE now offers you and your family convenient online counseling for personal life issues such as deployment-related stress, marital or relationship problems, substance abuse, parenting and more. www.triwest.com/beneficiary/behavioralhealth/onlinecare/default.aspx

In the first couple of weeks, the phone feels like it weighs a thousand pounds (especially when the caller ID shows your in-laws are calling to check on you). I give myself two weeks to mope, whine and cry. I tell my friends and family that's what I'll be doing so the phone doesn't ring constantly. Once my two weeks are up, I put on my big girl panties and deal with it.

Long Distance Love Affair

One of the best cures for loneliness is to reach out to your Marine. It has helped me feel connected, even though he is so far away. Here are some great suggestions for keeping the sugar flowing once your Marine is underway:

Be sure you have the right address. That way your letters and e-mails will arrive on time.



Number your letters/ packages & include the date in the beginning of emails.

That way your Marine can read stuff “in order” if mail arrives in batches (which it usually does). This is especially helpful if you decide to rant about your mother’s meddling ways and he spends a half-hour writing out a response only to get the next email (or letter) where all is well again between you and mummy dearest, that was sent hours later but arrives days later.

Be patient. The Marines have limited access to email and mail delivery isn’t always regular. Don’t freak out if you don’t hear from them right away.

Answer any questions your Marine may have asked in an earlier message. You’ll keep the conversation going and keep your Marine from wondering or worrying.

Be creative. Letters and e-mails are great, but try changing it up with CDs of sentimental tunes, DVDs, or video recordings. Just remember that if it’s really private, it’s better not to send it. Do you really want to be the next Internet phenomenon? Not so much.

Express yourself clearly. Sarcasm doesn’t translate well, especially in email. This is tough for me because I clearly AM sarcastic, so try to keep anything you write straightforward.

Be honest. You don’t have to pretend that you’re feeling fine when you’re not, but don’t bellyache about silly, small things you’ll probably take care of before your Marine even gets his/her mail.

Don’t attach huge files to emails. If you send a photo, reduce the size and only send one at a time.

Most blogs, photo-sharing sites & email providers are blocked on government computers. If you choose to keep a family website with photos, be very, very careful about what you post for security reasons.

Use MotoMail for a speedy “letter.” The quickest way to get communications overseas to combat zones. MotoMail is a free way to communicate with your Marine via electronically delivered letters in as little as 24 hours! No one else reads the content of the letter; it’s between you and your Marine!



If you want to give your Marine some suggestions for things (s)he can write or send, here are some ideas from www.militaryonesource.com :

Write a running letter. Start it in the morning and add to it in the evening, if you can. If you do this for several days before you mail the letter, your family will have a better idea of your life while you are deployed.



Think of each other at a regular time each day. Set up a time each day, adjusting for the time difference, when you will stop what you're doing for a moment and think about each other.

Surprise your children with lunchbox notes. Send home a batch of short "I love you" notes for your spouse to tuck into your children's lunchboxes or under their pillows.



Send individual e-mails to your children. For a young child, you can create a Word document with big letters that can be printed.

Ask your family members to read your letters aloud at the dinner table. Even when there is no letter, ask them to bring you into their dinnertime conversation.

Share what you know. Have a regular "show-and-tell" where you teach your children something new in an e-mail, letter, or on the telephone. And your children can tell you about something new they learned in school, or discovered from a book or a friend.



Have an ongoing trivia contest. Through e-mail or letters, ask your spouse or children trivia questions and have them do the same for you

Share a letter. Write the first paragraph of a letter or story, then send it to your family to add another paragraph. Continue adding to the letter throughout your deployment.





Love in a Box

Can you believe there are Internet businesses that hock pre-made care packages for your Marine? I guess McLovin' is better than no lovin', but chances are your Marine would much prefer something from home.



Learn about any guidelines for military mail. You'll find rules, restrictions, and other helpful mailing information at <http://www.usps.com/supportingourtroops/maillingrestrictions.htm>

Get free mailing materials from the Postal Service. Call 1-800-610-8734 (Packing Supply) and

- Choose your language (1 is English, 2 is Spanish).
- Choose option 1 (it states it is for Express Mail service, Priority Mail or Global Express Guaranteed)
- When you reach a live agent, request CAREKIT04.
- Please allow 7-10 days for delivery.
- Note: These are free supplies, postage must be affixed.



Smaller, more frequent packages ship better and faster than one ginormous box.

The flat rate FPO/AP Priority Mail boxes rock.

Take advantage of click n' ship labels from the USPS. Especially for the rockin' flat rate boxes, it's so easy to go online and print pre-paid labels and customs forms. Just leave a note in your mailbox asking your postman to swing by your door for a pick-up.

<https://sss-web.usps.com/cns/landing.do>

DO NOT use packing peanuts or other Mailboxes, Etc. kaka to stuff your box. If you need to fill extra space, use little packs of tissues, Ziploc bags filled with wipes, rolls of socks or even newspaper instead.

If you want to send home-baked stuff, the Nestle website has great suggestions, recipes and guidelines. Keep mailing times in mind!

<http://www.verybestbaking.com/promotions/programs/troops.aspx>

The most important part of a care package is the NOTE. So sayeth my Marine, because I often forget that part when I'm taping up the box.

ASK your Marine what (s)he needs, instead of sending random beef jerky. Although cute gag gifts may make them laugh, they have NO place to store ANYTHING in their quarters.

If you want to send kids' artwork, try a scanner or digital camera. Use the digital file to make smaller printouts, photos, notecards, or even magnets.

Don't be too specific on the customs forms. "Gift" is probably better than "Apple iPod Nano."



If you need ideas for care packages, try these items suggested by other seasoned spouses:

- Reading material
- A CD of MP3s/ iTunes your Marine can put on their digital player.
- Kool-aid mix or crystal light (esp. the individual packets for water bottles).
- Snacks that don't get melty and gross.
- Dryer sheets to tuck into their lockers.
- Cake in a Jar: <http://awtr.blogspot.com/2007/09/cake-in-jar.html>
- Bag balls, sneaker balls or other deodorizing products.
- Personal products, like razors, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, etc.
- Hand sanitizer gel (encourage your Marine to use it at the gym!).
- Writing materials & envelopes.
- Photos, photos, photos.



When you say when or where they are going... They may not get there.

What is OPSEC?

OPSEC or Operational Security is keeping potential adversaries from discovering critical Department Of Defense information. As the name suggests, it protects US operations - planned, in progress and those completed. Success depends on secrecy and surprise, so the military can accomplish the mission more quickly and with less risk. Enemies of freedom want this information, and they are not just after the military member to get it. They want you, the family member.

Examples of Critical Information:

The following examples may help you in defining parameters for your communications. It is important to remember that there are many more examples than those listed below:

1. Do not post exact deployment dates or redeployment (return) dates.
2. Do not reveal camp locations, including nearby cities. After the deployment is officially announced by Military officials, you may discuss locations that have been released, normally on the country level.
3. Do not discuss convoy routes (“They travelled through Takrit on our way to X”).
4. Detailed information on the mission, capabilities or *morale* of a unit.
5. Specific names or nicknames.
6. Personnel transactions that occur in large numbers (Example: pay information, powers of attorney, wills, etc).
7. Details concerning security procedures, response times, tactics.
8. Don’t discuss equipment or lack thereof, to include training equipment.
9. Don’t speculate about future operations.
10. If posting pictures, don’t post anything that could be misconstrued or used for propaganda purposes. A good rule of thumb is to look at your picture without your caption or explanation and consider if it could be re-captioned to reflect poorly on coalition forces. For example, your image might show your Marine rescuing a child from a blast site, but could be re-captioned to insinuate that the child being captured or harmed. It has happened!
11. Avoid the use of count-up or count-down tickers for the same reason as rule #1.
12. Be very careful if posting pictures of your loved one. Avoid images that show significant landmarks near their base of operations, **and black out last names and unit affiliations.**
13. Do not, ever, post information about casualties (coalition or enemy).
14. Do not pass on rumors (“I heard they’re coming home early”, etc)

If you have any questions about something you want to post or a post you’ve read, contact your FRO!

Mail & Care Packages

Classes of Mail

FIRST CLASS (13 oz or less)

Averaging about 7-10 days for delivery

OEF 7-10 days to Camp Leatherneck + 7-10 days to FOBs

PRIORITY (Over 13 oz. up to 70 lbs.)

Recommended for packages.

Average about 7-10 days delivery.

LARGE FPO/APO FLAT RATE BOX (\$11.95 regardless of weight)

FLAT RATE BOX (\$10.35 regardless of weight)

FLAT RATE ENVELOPE (\$4.95 regardless of weight)

PARCEL POST (up to 70 lbs.)

Slowest/Cheapest way to send packages.

Average about 8-14 days delivery.

MOTO MAIL (Email to Hard-copy letter)

NON-POSTAL (USPS) carriers (i.e., FEDEX, UPS, DHL) are not handled by Military Postal Clerks.

VMU-1 Deployment Addresses

Your "TO" address label should look like this:

RANK, LAST NAME, FIRST NAME, MIDDLE INITIAL

VMU-1, DET #

UNIT #####

FPO AP #####-#####

Tips for Proper Packaging



Recommend **NYLON FILAMENT FIBER TAPE OR MAILING TAPE**.

Masking and scotch tape are **NOT AUTHORIZED**.

Place **LIQUID** items such as salsa, lotion and beverages in separate zip lock bags.

Always use the **SMALLEST** box possible.

Always use **DURABLE** boxes.

Use **BUBBLE WRAP/STYROFOAM POPCORN** when sending breakable items.

Package items **TIGHTLY** to avoid shifting.

Never send **BULKY** items in an envelope (i.e., Keys, Dog Tags, Rings, and Cassette Tapes).

Include the **RETURN** and **ADDRESSEES ADDRESS** inside the parcel.

Place the address on only one side of the article being mailed.

Use **INSURANCE** on packages that contain valuable items going to and from the U.S. and deployment site.

Customs Regulations

All mail weighing **OVER 16 OUNCES** must be presented to a post office for mailing.

All parcels being sent **FROM, TO or BETWEEN** an APO/FPO must bear a customs form.

To assist customs and prevent damage to your package, include **Lock Combination or Keys** when mailing sea-bags, or foot lockers.

Custom forms must be filled out in **DETAIL**.

Mailing Restrictions

OBSCENE MATERIAL (pictures, magazines, nude or semi-nude).

PORK and PORK BY-PRODUCTS.

LARGE QUANTITIES of material contrary to the **Islamic** belief. Quantities for personal use are permissible.

No Alcohol.

For **additional restriction**, contact your local military post office.

EXPRESS MAIL not authorized.

If accidentally accepted at post office, request refund for overpayment.

FREE Postal Mailing Supplies

www.usps.com 1-800-610-8734

Mailed to your home (ask for military package)

- 6 Priority Boxes
- 6 Mailing Labels
- 6 US Customs Forms
- 1 Roll of tape



Free Mail

FROM an overseas combat location **TO** the United States **ONLY**.

Postcards, Letters and Recorded Communications (whether sound or video) with the character of personal correspondence.

Must have a **FROM** and a **TO** address.

“FREE” written in the top right corner.

Just Call Me Mini-Oprah

During Deployment: Recovery and Stabilization (3 to 5 weeks into the deployment, until a month before return)

A few weeks after D-Day, you decide it's time to suck it up and clean house. You've hopefully heard a little somethin' somethin' from your Marine, and you know (s)he is adjusting to new routines and new digs. It's time to pull it together and get your new schedule rolling.

It's totally normal to feel, on the upside:

- Confident and independent, totally digging your newfound Oprah-ness.
- Excited about starting some new projects (whether it's craft stuff, home improvement, or self improvement).
- Proud of what you've been able to manage without your Marine.
- Thrilled about the extra combat pay.

It's totally normal to feel, on the downside:

- A little confused about embracing your Oprah-ness (you want to be confident and independent, but are afraid that means you don't need your spouse anymore).
- Confused about sweet extra pay your Marine starts
- Nervous about asking for help, whether it's from friends, church, work, or charities.
- Weird when you say "MY house, MY kids, MY car ...".
- Scared and vulnerable when you're home alone at night.
- Completely crappy and ill from the new stresses you're under.
- Freaked out and discombobulated by a tiny crisis, like losing the car keys.
- Un-sexy and unattractive.

A very wise CO's wife told me, a few deployments ago, "you can count every day, or you can make every day count. What's it gonna be?" Finding balance can be tough. I want to keep a space in my life and my heart for my Marine, but at the same time I don't want to put my whole life on pause while he's deployed.

The best way to find and keep that balance is pretty simple: do a little something for your Marine every day (s)he is deployed – email, letter, package, journal entry, family ritual, maybe even get a phone call! Just as importantly, do something for yourself every day your Marine is deployed.

Cruise Food and Other Self-Care

In order to take care of your children, your home, your pets or your work responsibilities, you must be taking care of yourself! It's so easy to neglect ourselves! But you can't let how you eat, the amount of sleep you get and exercise go by the wayside. If you're not physically healthy, handling the day-to-day stress of a deployment would be next to impossible. Here are some important things to know:



“**Cruise food**” is the down-scaled dinner (and snacks) we eat when our Marines are away. It's tempting and awfully easy to depend on McDonald's and Pizza Hut delivery for said dinners, but it's a trade-off: the time saved makes your wallet smaller and your butt bigger. Here are some alternatives without ton of extra stress and effort:

- Consider having your groceries delivered. Although it sounds expensive at first, if you shop the specials you can do pretty well. By ordering groceries online, you also don't do all the impulse buying that happens when you shop with kids. This is an option that may not be available to those of us who stay local during a deployment. But it's worth checking into.

- o www.vons.com
- o www.albertsons.com

- Go in with a friend to split entrees at an “assembly kitchen”. These businesses allow you to pre-order meals and then make an appointment to go in and assemble your dinners. Keep them in your freezer and then just pop them in the oven for a quick, healthy dinner!

- o www.dinnerstudio.com
- o www.dreamdinners.com
- o www.ingredientz.com
- o www.supersuppers.com
- o www.healthycreations.com (all organic!)

- Consider setting up a dinner co-op with a few other friends. I knew a group of families in Okinawa who swore by dinner co-ops. One day of the week, you cook for all four families & put it in containers. The other families stop by to get their goods, and then you get to pick up (and not cook) the other three nights!

- Get your kids in on the action. If they help with the menu planning and even dinner prep, they're much more likely to eat whatever is fixed.
- One day a week cooking. Once a week, cook up some healthy meals from a website like: <http://www.readyseteat.com/good-for-you.do?gclid=CJnbpvXP0akCFQhUgwodYUhMnQ> and freeze your creations in plastic bags (easier storing/stacking and saves space. Or, if you have plenty of room in your freezer, find the cheap, disposable containers at the store and use those.

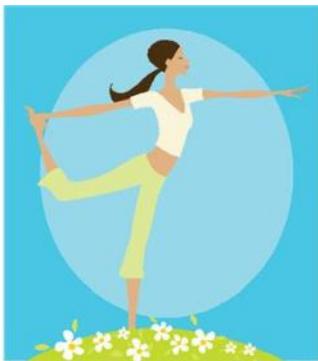


Sleep is your friend, but always seems to be duking it out with worry. Drinking (alcohol) to fall asleep will bite you in the butt. Alcohol disrupts sleep cycles. Falling asleep alone can be rough at first. But if you try to get yourself on a routine, it will make it easier. Here are a few things that help some spouses sleep better:

- Keeping a regular bedtime (for the kiddos, too!).
- Not having a TV in the bedroom.
- Avoiding alcohol & caffeine.
- Reading or knitting before bed.
- Emailing my Marine before bed.
- Exercising (with sweat), but not in the evening.
- Praying (if that's your thing).



Exercise ... well, I shouldn't preach because I'm pretty bad about exercising these days. But I can say that when I do work out, I sleep better and generally have a better attitude. I also know that I eat when I feel stressed and can pack on some poundage during a deployment. Consider trying the following:



- Use 10 free hours of childcare per month at the CDC!
- Swap babysitting with a friend so we can take turns running (OK, fast walking).
- Working out with videos.
- Working out with a friend, if I can make arrangements for my kids. Check out www.sittercity.com/dod for great childcare/babysitting options (FREE registration for military spouses!).

I haven't taken advantage myself, but I do know the on-base gyms offer personal trainers for free. If you can take advantage of the drop-in care on base as well, you can save yourself some major dollahs in gym fees.

Speaking of videos, there's a new one out called "NikkiFitness Military Wife Workout." It's a 30-minute DVD available on www.amazon.com, and you can even download different music to change up your workout. One spouse wrote, "One deployment I really stepped up my workouts, lost some pounds and got sculpted. When my Marine saw me for the first time, it was just like in the cartoons. His eyes popped out with that "ah-woo-gah" sound and his tongue hit the blacktop. That moment was worth every drop of sweat!"

Volun-cheer!



There's a joke about a military spouse calling her friend, ready to lose it because she's had it with the deployment. The friend asks, "are you with anybody?" The spouse says "no, I'm alone, why?" The friend replies, "Well, then, you're with a crazy person! Get out of there!" (Wha wha whaaa.) Sometimes I do let myself wallow a little too much in the Poor, Poor, Pitiful Me mode. Isolation becomes a nasty downward spiral – the more I withdraw, the harder it is to pick up the phone and get out of the house. The less I go out, the more I want to stay in, and on down it goes.

One of the best ways to get out of my own head is by doing something for someone else. Many of the organizations below even reimburse for childcare:

American Red Cross	(760) 830-6685
Armed Services YMCA	(760) 830-7481
Family Readiness Training	(760) 830-4163
Armed Services YMCA	(760) 830-7481
MCCS Youth Sports	(760) 830-3910
Navy Marine Corps Relief Society	(760) 830-6323
L.I.N.K.S	(760) 830-1696



If you're active in a church, temple, or other religious organization, chances are you have all kinds of places to help out. If your kids are involved in sports, scouting or other groups you know they're always looking for volunteers. I'm careful not to over-schedule myself (well, most of the time), but keeping my calendar pretty full does keep me distracted.

Exercising my Brain

One of the upsides of having your Marine deployed is that your evenings are free to ... well, what do you do with all the free time? I tend to make lists of ALL the projects I'm going to start or finish, and then keep re-writing said lists. As a testament, I have a whole bin in my closet of "UFOs" (UnFinished Objects).

I've spent an entire deployment channel surfing after the kids were in bed and did learn a lot watching the Food Network. It made me insanely hungry. Make time to exercise your brain and schedule fun. Work on your education. Take some hobby classes. Learn how to invest the extra pay. Consider some part-time employment. Tour your own town and get out of the house. Most importantly, take lots of pictures to send to your Marine so they know you're managing OK solo.

Family Member Employment Assistance Program (Career Resource Office)

Bldg 1438S 730-830-7225

Lifelong Learning Library

Bldg 1528 760-830-6875

Lifelong Learning Education Center

Bldg 1524N 730-830-6881

Personal Financial Management

Village Center, Bldg 1551 760-830-7342

LifeSkills Education & Training

Village Center, Bldg 1551 760-830-3115

MyCAA Program

The Department of Defense's expanded Military Spouse Accounts (MyCAA) program is now offering up to \$6,000 to military spouses who are interested in pursuing degree programs, licenses or credentials leading to careers in high growth, high demand portable career fields. **Military OneSource Career/Education Consultant at 1-800-342-9647**

Information Tickets and Tours (ITT)

In the Exchange 760-830-6163 Ext 252

Tons of additional resources and free fun

www.mccs29palms.com

We've taken advantage of the cabins, campgrounds, outdoor recreation rentals, tours and cheap tickets available through the base Information Tickets and Tours (ITT) and have enjoyed fab family fun while our Marine was away. Plan it, talk it up and then DO IT. Better yet, call another spouse to share the fun.



What do I do if . . .



The last training exercise my Marine was away, I joked with another spouse about how the washing machine always breaks right after they leave. Sure as shootin' my washer died the next day! 1-800-APPLIANCE did come to the rescue within 24 hours, although they were a little pricey. What about all the other emergencies, like if . . .

I need healthcare help?

Are you illin' on the weekend? Are you out of state? Before the super-bug visits, go to www.triwest.com and register. They'll tell you all your info, like if you're standard or prime. The website is a one-stop information gold mine.



Bush Naval Hospital Numbers:

Appointment Line (760) 830-2752
Pharmacy Refills (760) 830-2406
Quarterdeck (760) 830-2190

If all else fails call **888-TRI-WEST**. Their hours are M-F 0600 to 1800 (not useful in an emergency, but they do have an after hours crisis line). The crisis line is emergencies only, like if you're out of state and need authorization for a different provider.

...my car breaks down?

If you don't have AAA, or other emergency roadside assistance, now would be a good time to coverage is a measly six bucks every six months.



for

If your car is still drive-able but having issues, try the Auto Skills Center on base. Technically, the garage is there as a hobby shop so you may need to ask for "guidance" with your car repair. Call ahead to check availability and hours: 760-830-7527/4179. I have always found them to be very helpful!

...I need a break from my kids?

Single parenting is exhausting, whether you're a full-time mommy/daddy or work outside your home as well. Babysitters are convenient but can get pricey. Some other options to consider are:

- Drop In Care at the CDC

The registration process is tedious and somewhat painful, but it'll be worth it. They currently offer 10 FREE hours of care per child per month to spouses of the deployed. Contact the resource and referral for more info: 760-830-3557 ext:230

- www.sittercity.com/dod

Registration is FREE on this childcare referral website. Login and post your need or search for a babysitter that meets your needs.

- Setting up a babysitting swap with a friend.

Currently, I swap sitting with a friend one Saturday (over)night a month.

- Contact the Child Development Center about a list of approved in-home childcare providers
Some providers have slots specifically for periodic drop-in care!

- o CDC Resource and Referral 760-830-3227 ext: 230

- Check to see if your church or other area churches offer a free parent's night out.
Sometimes the YMCA or local businesses also offer similar services, but they can be pricey.

- The National Association of Childcare Resources & Referral Agencies

- o They can help find providers for you & can even help pay for it!
<http://www.naccrra.org/MilitaryPrograms>

- Check with your EFMP (Exceptional Family Member Program) Director about free Respite Care

- o 29 Palms MCCS 760-830-7740

If you are looking for a babysitter, it's key to have one who can drive or has a parent willing to drop off or at least pick up. Try:

- o Your church's youth group
- o Your neighbors
- o Word-of-mouth referral from other friends
- o The child development programs at local colleges





Finally! **During Deployment: Anticipating Homecoming** **(2 – 6 weeks before return)**

A few weeks before homecoming, your Family Readiness Officer calls and tells you the “window” for your Marine’s return. You hang up the phone, ready to holler with happiness, and instead what comes out of your mouth is, “Uhhhh ...” Anticipation means two things: excitement and, yup, fear.

It’s totally normal to experience, on the upside:

- Complete relief that it’s almost over
- Raunchy fantasies about what happens once he’s home. Enough said.
- Crazy joy about being together again.
- Constant mental planning or list making of all the things you want to do together once your Marine is home.

It’s totally normal to experience, on the downside:

- Obsessive list-making (of all the things you meant to do but didn’t get done).
- Resentment about having to give up some of your hard-earned independence.
- Fear about how your Marine will react to seeing you, especially if you’ve made any changes to your appearance.
- Feeling totally restless and uncomfortable in your own skin because the anticipation is killing you.
- Flip-flopping in a New York minute between happiness and fear.
- Serious difficulty sleeping.

I usually have some major housecleaning to do because I let all my hobby supplies run amok and pile up. If I managed to get around to any redecorating, I have final touches to make before the unveiling. I’m usually trying to get off the last few pounds as well. I can tell you from personal experience, however, that the spray-on tans are still a little Oompah-Loompah looking. My Marine joked after one homecoming that he would have had an easier time finding me in crowd if I’d told him to look for the orange girl.

Most definitely, **go to the return and reunion brief**. MCCA has done a great job putting together info that’s realistic and helpful. Hearing other spouses’ experience and their suggestions helped me understand so much better what to expect. They also share info on the effects of combat stress (which is different from and much more common than Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). It helped explain a lot of the behavior I see in my Marine when he first gets home.

Go to the banner-making party as well. The Family Readiness Officer will usually put something together shortly before the unit gets back to make banners and posters. It’s a great time to connect with other families and let your anticipation bounce around.

“Reunited and it Feeels so Gooood...”

(If you're not a child of the 70s, the title may be a little lost on you, but Peaches and Cream were on to something ...)



The only thing more excruciating than a reunion day is Christmas morning when you're like, six years old and hoping for the bike with the banana seat and handlebar streamers. If you slept at all the night before, all you can think “when is (s)he getting here?” It's been 7 months of patience and prayer, give or take, all for this day, this moment, this embrace, this kiss, and now you're debating which underwear to pick.

All that build up and they'll still arrive on a rickety bus. But, no matter how they get there, if somebody started cranking that Lee Greenwood song, “Proud to be an American” everybody waiting for **The Arrival** would be a snotty, sobbing mess.

Here are some observations about homecoming:

Your Family Readiness Officer *really* does have the most updated info on exactly when your Marine will arrive. They'll call you with any changes or updates as soon as they info is passed. Sometimes you'll hear a rumor or two flying around, but your Family Readiness Officer ***will always have*** the most recent dates, times & lists.

Plan to wait ... and wait, and wait some more. Families are advised to arrive well before the unit, so that nobody misses the moment. Thankfully, there are usually snacks & a jump house to keep the kids occupied.

Your Marine *really doesn't* give a flip what you wear. They're just happy to see us, even though we agonized over matching outfits for all the kids and the most flattering get-up for ourselves. Ladies, please, don't feel like it's necessary to dress for an evening out at a strip club and you're one of the employees. *Your Marine already knows what he's been missing.*

Don't geek out, but wear comfortable shoes & bring some sunscreen. If you're waiting outside during the day, you'll be standing a long time in the SoCal sun. Crispy is so not sexy.

Yes, they all look alike in their uniforms. The surge of screaming people pressing towards the people in tan is a something to see. Sometimes it takes a while to find your Marine, so don't freak out if you don't find each other right away. At my last homecoming, I had this brief moment of panic, as if he wasn't there. Funny thing? I had just talked to him thirty minutes before on their way to Camp Lejeune from Cherry Point. :) In the dark of that January night, all I knew was . . . I couldn't find him. And then, just as he'd given up and started to wonder towards the truck with all the gear, we literally walked into each other. It was pretty hilarious. Don't stress if you don't see him right away. I promise...he really is there. ;)

Bring along a friend, if you can, to take pictures of “The Moment.”

Expect to wait, and wait and wait some more after The Reunion. It *can*, though it may not, take about two hours from the time the Marines arrive until they can actually leave with their families. Just be patient, and know your Marine is just as ready as you are to get home.

Have an easy supper ready to roll. I usually make up a pan of lasagna the night before & stick it in the fridge. Even if my Marine says “let’s get out” I know he’d rather have my home cooking.

Don’t feel like you have to attack your Marine in the car, in the parking lot, while he’s still in his cammies. If you’ve waited this long for some lovin’, wait until you have time to get home, light some candles and make it memorable. If it feels awkward (which it usually does), ask your Marine if you can give him/ her a backrub, and then ask for one yourself.

Consider having some professional “home again” family photos taken (after a few days of reunion lovin’.) We have a gorgeous beach photo taken the first week our Marine was home. Sounds hokey, but you can really feel the love in the picture! Many photographers have now volunteered to offer professional photography for **FREE** before departure, during reunion, and after reunion. Go to <http://www.oplove.org/> for information on Love: Reunited.



If you attend the reunion workshop (which, again, I can’t recommend enough!) you’ll hear more about what to expect from your Marine in the days and weeks after they get back. The Marines are briefed on their end, as well, about how to make a smoother transition back into family life.

What is the Mass Communication Tool?

- MCT is a web-based tool that will allow VMU-1 to communicate official command information to a large number of contacts simultaneously.
- These messages are electronic and they will come in the form of emails .
- This new tool eliminates the delays and inaccuracies sometimes caused by using a phone tree.

What is official command communication?

- Information on family briefs such as Pre-Deployment or Return and Reunion briefs.
- Return of unit notices including dates, times and locations.
- Family day information.
- Requests for volunteers.

NO CLASSIFIED OR CASUALTY INFORMATION WILL BE PASSED VIA THIS TOOL

Who will be notified through the MCT?

- Every Marine has the option to add up to four individual contacts.
- Distribution of official command communications to spouses is automatic.
- All other contacts must have written authorization from the squadron member.
- Contacts must be at least 18 years of age.

Is the MCT secure?

- The data collected will be stored securely within the Mass Communication Tool in accordance with Marine Corps regulations.
- The information will not be shared with any outside sources and is only used for notifications associated to your Command.



I love you. Don't I?

After the Deployment: Renegotiating the Marriage Contract (Homecoming and after)

One of our worst homecomings was probably our first, because we both had huge expectations we never bothered to discuss. After a week of constant togetherness I was ready for a divorce. Sometimes, that post-deployment leave is too much to handle after months of separation. I've learned to negotiate more and expect less the first few weeks my Marine is home.

It's one thing to be together in person, but another thing entirely to reconnect emotionally. At first, having my Marine back in the house is just ... weird. I'll have moments when I feel like he was never gone, that we just picked back up where we left off. Other times I'll look at him and think "who are you?" Deployments change both of us.

Patience, patience, patience. Some of the things that have helped homecomings go a little more smoothly for us are:

- **Sharing our expectations (usually via email) before the reunion.** We talk about what we'd like to do together, or not do together.
- **Planning some fun family activities, but not packing the calendar.** Down time to just hang out is important, too.
- **Planning time to hang out with our friends, separately.** I found I got really resentful about suddenly not having girlfriend time, and knew my Marine needed to reconnect with some of his guy friends.
- **Arranging for someone to take our kids** overnight, or for a weekend, so that we can have some couple time.
- **Blocking off time for each child** to spend alone with him/her when they get back.
- **Inviting my Marine to pick up chores** he used to do, but not expecting or demanding it.

CREDO retreats, sponsored by the chaplains' office, are a great idea. If think your Marine may be reluctant to attend, tell him/her that intimacy is highly encouraged as "homework"! Several spouses have told me the weekend was a great way to reconnect after their Marine returned. For information on CREDO contact the Camp Pendleton CREDO Office 760-725-4954.

We Can Do It!

I've said so many times that I wouldn't wish deployments on any family, but that ours is stronger for having survived them. If you look at the front of my fridge, it's almost deployment-ready. You'd find:

- A magnet with my Family Readiness Officer's name & phone number.
- A magnet that reads "I'd exercise, but I'm too fat".
- Another magnet that reads "Some people walk in the rain ... others just get wet".
- A week's worth of dinner menus.
- A photo of our Marine.
- One of my favorite photos I've snapped, of spring flowers at the Mission in San Juan Capistrano (it always puts me in a good mood).
- A family calendar covered in stuff to do.
- A smudged index card with my favorite quote ever: "Ships in harbor are safe, but that's not what ships are made for" (author unknown).

I still need a good phone list & our packet of emergency info. Am I feeling confident? Hmm ... depends on the day. When I smile at my Marine these days, it's kind of that, bittersweet smile that says, "I love you. I'm tucking this moment away for future reference." At least I know my Smart Girl's Guide will be in my back pocket, or at least stuck to my fridge, for the moments my confidence needs a pick-me up.



Appendix A

TRANSPORTATION

Do you have a vehicle? Yes____ No____
When does your registration (tags) expire? Date_____
When will your auto insurance expire? Date_____
When will your state inspection expire? Date_____
Vehicle serviced recently? Yes____ No____
Spouse knows where to take the car for minor maintenance and repair? Yes____ No____
Will your base stickers expire while deployed? Yes____ No____
Are you making arrangements to store your vehicle (TMO: x-6701)? Yes____ No____

HOUSING

Will your lease expire while deployed? Yes____ No____
Spouse knows where circuit breakers are located and how to check/reset them? Yes____ No____
Spouse knows whom to call in case of home maintenance problems (i.e., plumbing, heating, A/C, electrical, broken windows, etc.)? Yes____ No____
Spouse has earthquake preparedness kit? Yes____ No____
Spouse has all keys/combinations to the house, car, garage, storage unit, and padlocks? Yes____ No____
If you are on the military housing waiting list, have you notified the base housing office that you are being deployed and your spouse is familiar with procedures and agencies to assist in the move to base-housing should it become available while deployed? Yes____ No____

MEDICAL/DENTAL

Family members enrolled in DEERS? Yes____ No____
Family members enrolled in TRICARE and know the toll free number to make appointments? Yes____ No____
Spouse knows the location of the local Hospital? Yes____ No____
Spouse knows the phone number of the Red Cross and the services they offer? Yes____ No____
Do any family members have a pending medical condition, which may require your presence? Yes____ No____
If yes, explain:_____

ADMINISTRATIVE

When do your dependents ID card(s) expire? Date_____
Spouse knows your address while deployed? Yes____ No____
Does your spouse (or trusted agent) possess a special or general Power(s) of Attorney? Yes____ No____
If so, when does it expire? Date_____
Will is current? Yes____ No____
Have you reviewed your life insurance plan with your next of kin? Yes____ No____
Spouse (or trusted agent) knows where important family papers are and has access to them? Yes____ No____
Spouse knows the number to Marine Corps Community Services? Yes____ No____
RED and SGLI are current? Yes____ No____
Spouse (or trusted agent) knows the name and phone number of the Command's Family Readiness Officer? Yes____ No____

Do you have an *In Loco Parentis* for any dependant minors? Yes___ No___
 Will federal taxes be due during this deployment? Yes___ No___
 If so, does your spouse (or trusted agent) possess the IRS Power of Attorney? Yes___ No___

FINANCIAL

Do you currently have any pay problems? Yes___ No___
 Are you enrolled with myPay? Yes___ No___
 Does your spouse have myPay access privileges for printing your LES and W-2? Yes___ No___
 Split Pay (If deployed for 6 months or more)? Yes___ No___
 Spouse (or trusted agent) is familiar with the following financial matters:
 Date bills are due? Yes___ No___
 Method of payment? Yes___ No___
 Use of the family checkbook? Yes___ No___
 Spouse has adequate funds to cover all monthly expenses? Yes___ No___
 Spouse knows the number and location of the Navy & Marine Corps Relief Society Office (NMCRS)? Yes___ No___
 Is spouse authorized to receive NMCRS assistance? Yes___ No___

CACP (Casualty Assistance Calls Program)

In the event of serious injury or death to the service member, who do you (spouse) wish to accompany the Navy Representative when the initial call is made (i.e., friend, local relative)?

Name: _____

Address: _____ Phone#1: _____

_____ Phone#2: _____

Is the *person authorized direct disposition* correct in the Record of Emergency Data (RED) portion of your Service Record Book (SRB) / Officer Qualification Record (OQR)? Yes___ No___

Is there anyone you (spouse) do NOT want to see at this time? Yes___ No___

If so, please specify the name(s) below:

Would you (spouse) like to have a clergyman/chaplain present during notification?

Yes___ No___

If a specific clergyman is desired, please give name and/or church:

Appendix B: PERSONAL SECURITY

PLANNING A TRIP

- + Let the FRO know when you are leaving and returning
- + Notify the Base Housing Office of your departure/return dates.
- + Leave a house key with a trusted friend/neighbor to check on your home.
- + Put a hold on your newspaper and mail, or have a neighbor pick up.
- + Put several lights on automatic timers, set for family's normal routine.
- + Make arrangements to have your lawn mowed.
- + If "out in town", notify the local police, they may periodically check your home. Let them know your neighbor has a key and will be checking your house.
- + Never pick up hitchhikers.

ON THE STREET

- + Whenever possible take a friend with you, especially if you're walking at night.
- + Be aware as to where you are and who is around you.
- + Dress safely.
- + Keep your handbag close to your body and one arm free.
- + Be aware potential attackers may ask questions or start a conversation.
- + If you are followed by a car/person, get to the police station, lighted residence or business and go inside. If you can't get inside, make noise and/or blow a whistle.

GENERAL

- + Do not advertise that you are alone.
- + Do not pass out any information.
- + Keep shrubbery trimmed so it can't be used as a hiding place.
- + If you hear someone outside your house, call a neighbor or police for help.
- + Be alert when you enter/leave your home or car.
- + A dog in the house (or a dog food bowl by the front door) deters would be intruders.
- + If confronted, remain calm, keep yourself together, and think of options.
- + The highest priority is to survive with the least physical or psychological harm.

IN THE CAR

- + Always lock the car (when driving and parked - even for short periods).
- + Have your key in hand so you don't have to linger before entering the car.
- + Look inside to see if anyone is hiding, even if the doors were locked.
- + When leaving your keys with a car repair, parking garage, etc
 - Leave just the ignition key and no others (the trunk key, only if it's needed).
 - Do not leave the house key.
- + Always use well-lit, traveled routes. Avoid dangerous and unfamiliar areas.
- + If you have car trouble, raise the hood, lock yourself in the car, and wait for police.
- + If people stop to help, do not get out of the car. Roll your window down a few inches and ask them to call the police to help you.
- + Keep the car in good running order, never drive with less than 1/4 of a tank of gas.
- + If you are being followed, never go home.
 - Go to a well lit public place, make sure your car doors are locked and then BLOW THE HORN until help arrives.
 - Or, drive to a police/fire station & blow your horn (if you feel unsafe).
 - DO NOT TURN OFF YOUR IGNITION!
 - Wait for help to arrive. DON'T PANIC -- keep calm.

HOME SECURITY

Precautions and Prevention

LOCKS Use deadbolts on doors, window locks, and sliding glass door locks.

- Keep the doors locked at all times.
- Do not place spare house key in obvious places: mailbox, under doormat, etc.

CALLERS Do not open the door unless you are positive of the person's identity.

- Talk to the person through the door.
- If the person needs to use the phone, obtain the number and identity of the person he/she is trying to call; make call for them, while they wait outside.

TELEPHONE Do not give personal information over the phone, especially to callers saying they need your help in conducting a survey.

- If you receive an obscene phone call, hang up. Contact the police and phone company if these calls persist. Change your phone number if they continue.
- Advise your children not to give information over the phone, especially about their parent's whereabouts.

VALUABLES Never keep large sums of money around.

- Never tell anyone what valuables you have in the house.

LIGHTING Use good exterior lighting consistently (whether you are home or away).

FIRE & CARBON MONOXIDE Make sure your fire/smoke and carbon monoxide detectors work, especially for homes/apartments using gas heating.

- If you live in a 2-story house/apt., have an escape ladder in case you are trapped on the second floor.

REPAIRS Schedule repairs during the daylight hours and invite a friend over for when the repairman visits.

- Always use a reputable, well-known repair company.
- Ask for identification before allowing a repairman into your home.

FIRE DRILLS Hold a "fire drill" with the children, make sure they know how to get out and where to go (which neighbor's doorstep, for instance).

SECURITY CHECKLIST FOR HOME

- Lock/deadbolts -- installed and in good working order.
- Smoke & carbon monoxide alarms -- batteries replaced or new.
- Fire extinguishers -- "green" zone on gauges.
- Fire escape ladders, if needed -- 2nd floor bedroom windows.
- Police contacted about a home visit to check home for security.
- Circuit breaker box location known and how to use.
- Other: _____

Appendix C: FAMILY CARE PLAN

A Family Care Plan details who can and will take care of your children in emergency circumstances. It's a Marine Corps best practice for a worst case scenario. A few pages detailing your children's routines and care takers and should be easy to access (read: posted on the fridge!) as well as a list of phone contacts.

Your Plan should also include a Special Power of Attorney authorizing care; consider making two POA's for a local family who can keep your children and for an out-of town relative who could come in an emergency. The POA does NOT transfer custody; it just authorizes the people you designate to make medical and school decisions if you're unable to do so.

Instructions for Completing a Family Care Plan

1. Fill out the "Letter of Instruction to the Command". This document is turned into the Family Readiness Officer to be kept on file. It must be updated once a year.
2. Fill out and notarize a Special Power of Attorney (*In Loco Parentis*) for both your short term caregiver and your long term guardian. This can be done by the Legal Officer in the squadron or Base Legal. Get at least two copies, one for yourself and one for the guardian. The form is included in this packet.
3. Helpful Recommendations:
 - Complete a Will.
 - Create a budget to analyze current financial state.
 - Set up a separate account for your long term guardian.
 - Obtain a pre-paid credit card for your short term caregiver.
 - Obtain copies of your spouse's and children's medical and dental records.
 - Make a list of instructions for your caregivers/guardians regarding special needs, medicine, allergies, etc.
 - Inform caregiver/guardian of location of health/ID cards.
 - Obtain veterinary records for your caregiver.
 - Provide maps, spare set of car keys, house keys, and pet information for your caregiver guardian.
 - Give instructions to your children's school, child care provider, or spouse's employer indentifying your caregivers/guardians.

Family Care Plan Letter of Instruction to the Command

1. I/We _____, parents of _____ have made the following arrangements for the care of my/our dependent family member(s) in the event that I/we am/are not available to provide the proper care due to absence for military service or emergency which would require me/us to be away from them for an extended period of time.

2. _____ (Short-Term caregiver) has been given legal authority (Power of Attorney) to care for my/our child(ren) until the long-term guardian can arrive to care for them in this location or transport them to the guardian's residence where they will remain until my/our return.

3. _____ (Long-Term caregiver) has been given legal authority (Power of Attorney) to care for my/our child(ren) until the long-term guardian can arrive to care for them in this location or transport them to the guardian's residence where they will remain until my/our return.

4. Should it be necessary to contact any of the persons involved in the transportation, support, or care for my/our children, the following information is provided:

a. Short-Term Caregiver: _____
Home Phone: _____
Cell Phone: _____
Email: _____
Address: _____

b. Long-Term Caregiver: _____
Home Phone: _____
Cell Phone: _____
Email: _____
Address: _____

c. Daycare Facility/ Baby Sitter: _____
POC: _____
Phone: _____
Cell Phone: _____
Address: _____

5. _____ is/are cared for by the local child care provider listed above during the week between the hours of _____ and _____

6. _____ is/are authorized to pick up my child(ren) at the local child care provider listed above.

7. Funds required to provide financial support for my/our dependent family member(s) will be provided by allotment to be initiated immediately upon my/our departure, or by financial arrangements outlined in the attached documents.

8. _____ has access to a special account and will ensure that funds are available to cover the expenses of the escort/guardian.

9. Special documents pertaining to my/our child(ren) such as ID cards, medical records, school record, passports, as well as special instructions on medical prescriptions, allergies, or other pertinent information will accompany my/our child(ren) if they are not already in the possession of the escort/guardian.

10. Those persons acting in my/our behalf for care of my/our child(ren) and who have sufficient legal authority, copies certificates of acceptance, and either ID cards or applications for the same, should apply to the commander of the nearest military installation for an agent's letter allowing them access to military facilities and services on behalf of my/our children.

11. If for any reason, the persons designated as escorts or guardians are unable to exercise their responsibilities after my/our departure, please ensure that a Red Cross message is immediately transmitted to my/our unit commander(s), so that situation can be rectified as soon as possible. Additional assistance may be obtained from my/our unit rear detachment commander or Family Readiness Officer whose address is listed below:

12. Family Readiness Officer, complete unit address and telephone number:

Rachel Sandlin
VMU-1 Family Readiness Officer
P.O. Box 788281
Twentynine Palms, CA 92277
730-830-6788
rachel.sandlin@usmc.mil

13. (Optional) Should it be necessary to settle my/our estate(s) my/our will(s) and other important documents are located:

14. Finally, a complete copy of my/our Family Care Plan with all required attachments is on file in my/our unit headquarters, which is located at the same address as shown above for the rear detachment commander.

NAME, RANK, SHOP: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

IPAC

Buildings 1459 & 1450

Hours of Operation

Monday – Friday 0730-1130 1300-1630

Customer Service

Points of Contact

SNCO 830-1818 x129

SNCO 830-1818 x160

Front Desk 830-1818 x115

Family Members

Adding a child, or removing a child

ANY change of Address

Required Documentation for Dependents

Current Special/General Power of Attorney

Current military or state ID

Pay Section

Points of Contact

Front Desk 830-1818 x161

Saving Deposit Program aka “J” Allotment

10% annual interest, compounded quarterly on a calendar year

No ceiling on the amount deposited, BUT the government only pays interest on or up to \$10,000.00

Must be in country 30 days and in receipt of IDP/HDP

Deployment Section

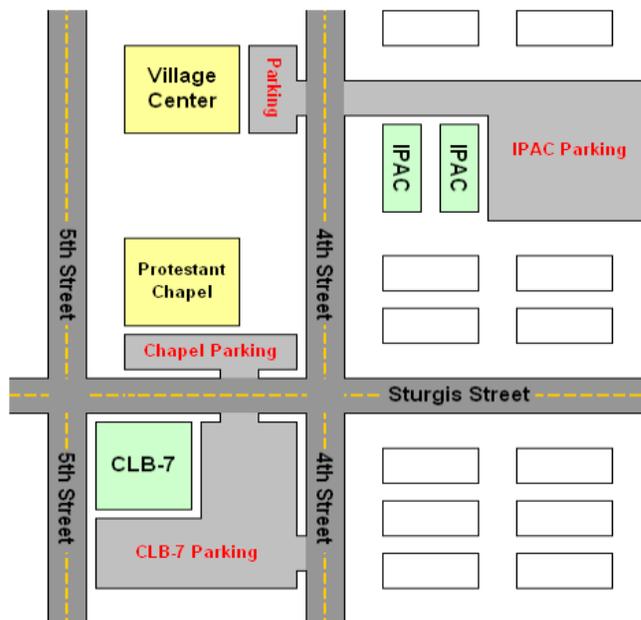
Points of Contact

SNCO 830-1818 x146

SNCO 830-1818 x164

Split Pay

The Split Pay Option allows Marines enrolled in the Direct Deposit Program (DDP) to receive a portion of their pay at their duty locality each payday. This amount, called the requested split pay amount (RSPA), must be a whole dollar amount and must be less than or equal to the Marine's norm pay. The remainder of pay due will be transmitted to the Marine's financial institution.



Savings Deposit Program: The Ten Percent Solution

What is the Savings Deposit Program? Do not confuse this with the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). TSP is available to everyone in the military. The Savings Deposit Program is available only to those serving in designated combat zones.

Interests and benefits of the SDP Marines deployed in combat zones, qualified hazardous duty areas, or certain contingency operations may deposit all or part of their unallotted pay into a DOD savings account up to \$10,000 during a single deployment. Savings Deposit Program (SDP) allows members to earn ten percent interest per year, compounded quarterly (2.5% per quarter). Maximum deposit is limited to a ten thousand (\$10,000).

Interest and Benefits of the SDP Although federal income earned in hazardous duty zones is tax-free, interest accrued on earnings deposited into the SDP is taxable. Members can designate the allotment amount in five-dollar increments.

Who is Eligible? Must be receiving Hostile Fire/Imminent Day Pay and serving in a designated combat zone or in direct support of a combat zone for more than 30 consecutive days or at least one day for each of three consecutive months.

Deposits Deposit is authorized of the money a member is entitled to receive on the payday before deposit less authorized deductions (allotments, TSP, etc). Pay and allowances include special continuation pay, reenlistment bonus, and pay allowances for unused accrued leave.

Marines use the program by arranging deposit through ADMIN/IPAC. Marines may begin making deposits on their 31st consecutive day in the designated area. Eligibility to make deposits terminates on the date of departure from theater. Active duty members may make deposits by cash, personal check, traveler's check, money order or allotment. Reserve component members may make deposits by cash, personal check or money order only. Standing policies regarding personal check acceptance and regulatory restrictions regarding number and type of allotments apply.

All deposit amounts, regardless of depository method, must be made in \$5 increments (e.g. \$50, \$65, \$1005, not \$1001.67).and cannot exceed a service member's monthly-unallotted current pay and allowances (e.g. monthly net pay after all deductions and allotments; includes special pays and reenlistment bonus).More than one deposit via cash, personal check, traveler's check, or money order may be made in a month but the cumulative total of the deposits cannot exceed the month's unallotted pay and allowances.

Marines can contribute via a "J" allotment (which is a continuation allotment) or make cash contribution. The "J" allotment cannot be via MYPAY online. Also if the Marine has an Agent with a Special Power of Attorney, which states the authority to establish, change, or stop allotments they can make a deposit either by allotment or by cash.

Participation via ALLOTMENT is the preferred method. Prior to deploying, contact ADMIN to complete a request if you desire to participate in the SDP.

Eligibility to make deposits and accrual of interest terminate 90 days from when Marine no longer rates Imminent Danger Pay. The maximum amount on which 10% interest is computed is \$10,000 (Principal and accrued interest combined).

Withdrawals Withdrawal of deposits may be requested 90 days after entitlement to IDP terminates. Emergency withdrawal requests may only be made when the health or welfare of a member or their dependent(s) would be jeopardized if the withdrawal were not ranted. Emergency withdrawals may be authorized by the member's commanding officer. If the principal and interest on the deposit reaches \$10,000, any amounts exceeding \$10,000 may be withdrawn quarterly at the member's request.

Requests for withdrawal may be made via fax or email. Send the following information via fax or email to:

Commercial (216) 522-6924

DSN 580-6924

Email: CCO-SDP@DFAS.MIL

NAME, SSN, PHONE #, BRANCH OF SERVICE, AMOUNT: ALL OR SPECIFIC, EFT INFO: BANK/ACCT #/ RTN #,
REASON: DEPARTURE OF ELIGIBILITY ZONE (PROVIDE DATE)

Stopping Allotment

Immediately following your return from deployment, contact GPAC and submit a request to stop allotment.

American Red Cross

P.O. Box 6043
Building 1551, Village Center
Twentynine Palms, CA 92278
plmsarc001.fct@usmc.mil
760-830-6685 or 877-272-7337

The Red Cross is a 24-hour, 365-day world wide emergency communications network.

Red Cross messages include notices of birth, death in the family, or serious illness.

The Red Cross **NEVER** recommends or requests leave but will convey the family or physician's request to the responsible authority. **Only the Command has authority to grant leave for emergencies with-in the immediate family.**

Who is immediate family?

Spouse, children, parents, loco parentis (verifiable by SRB), and siblings.

A Red Cross message is for informational purposes and does not guarantee an approval for emergency leave.

How to start a message:

Call 877-272-7337

Service Member's Full Name

Rank

Social Security Number

Unit Address

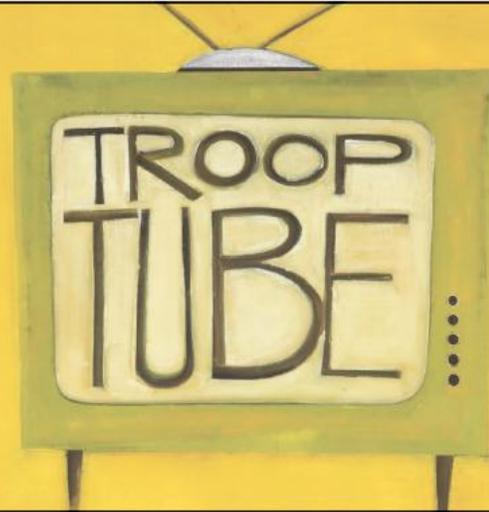
Name of person involved in the event (birth, death, illness)

POC that can provide verification (doctor, hospital, funeral home)

TUBE BE, OR NOT TO BE.

TroopTube for Youth

TroopTube is an online video site designed to help military families connect and keep in touch while miles apart. The site is designed for easy use, so military families can quickly upload videos and share the simple joys of each day with each other on MilitaryOneSource.com/trooptube. This website is intended for sharing and distribution of user generated video content operated by Military OneSource.



A new Youth component has been added to TroopTube. Youth development professionals and youth are invited to post their videos. These videos can be youth generated or generated by professionals working with youth. Youth are encouraged to upload videos to share their activities with deployed parents or family members. Professionals are encouraged to use this site to upload videos about new programs, summer camps, and activities in youth programs serving military families. TroopTube video production could also be included as a project within youth programs. Previously recorded videos are acceptable, as long as they are still current.



Serving Active Duty, Guard, Reserve and Their Families.

UPLOADING VIDEOS:

- 1) Create an account at MilitaryOneSource.com/trooptube.
- 2) Once logged in, look for the youth category and you may begin uploading videos. Click on the **"UPLOAD"** button.
- 3) Fill in the requested information and click on the **"SELECT VIDEO"** button. This will open a dialogue box prompting you to select the video file on your computer. TroopTube accepts almost all types of files under 20mb.
- 4) Once your video is selected click the **"SUBMIT"** button and wait till the upload is complete.
- 5) Once your file has been uploaded successfully it will go live within **24-48 hours**. Videos will be reviewed based on guidelines for national security and appropriate content. Your profile lists all the videos you've uploaded.

1-800-342-9647 | MilitaryOneSource.com

Having a Baby When Your Spouse is Deployed

Military careers sometimes require a father to be far from home when his baby is born. As an expecting mother, there are steps you can take to make the situation easier, including planning, seeking support, and staying connected with your husband.

Before the birth

Even planned birthdates sometimes change. Making plans in advance will help make sure you have the help you need, and do wonders for your peace of mind. Be sure to:

- Learn what TRICARE will cover where you plan to deliver. This is especially important if you travel home to be near family.
- Get a medical power of attorney. Choose someone who could make medical decisions for you and your child if you cannot. Leave a copy of the document with your doctor. Armed Forces Legal Assistance can help you find an office that will draft the document (go to <http://legalassistance.law.af.mil/index.php>).
- Contact the New Parent Support Program (NPSP), which provides one-on-one help and information for expectant and new parents: 830-7622.

Stay connected with your husband. You can help him stay involved by:

- Taking weekly photos of your growing body.
- Sending recordings of the heartbeat and ultrasound photos. You may need to highlight key parts like the head and feet.
- Investing in a Web cam. It may be possible to share the birth live over the Web if the hospital allows it and your husband is available.

Don't forget to:

- Choose a birth coach. Pick someone who can guide you through the delivery.
- Request a doula, who can provide emotional and physical support to a mother before, during, and after labor. Go to Operation Special Delivery at www.operationspecialdelivery.com for more information.
- Find someone to drive you to the hospital. Make sure that person has access to a military installation if you plan to deliver at a Military Treatment Facility. And make plans for a back-up driver just in case.
- Find out if your hospital allows cameras, video cameras, or Web cams. If taping during the birth isn't allowed, you may be able to videotape the moments before and after the baby is born.

Helping your spouse connect with the birth

You'll want to be sure that your husband feels as connected and informed as he can, despite the distance. You can:

- Bring a photograph of your spouse to the hospital to use as a focus point to help you during labor.
- Stay in touch by phone. If you can, call your husband when you go into labor and after the baby is born.
- Ask the people who are with you to write down their thoughts and experiences. Your husband will get a closer feel for what the birth day was.

When your husband returns

Once your husband returns home, he will need time and support in making the adjustment to fatherhood. Be sure to:

- Give your husband time to get to know the new baby. Try not to be disappointed if he doesn't seem as attached to the baby as you are. It's likely to take some time.

Child Birth Classes Bush Naval Hospital**760-830-2227**

This class is one evening a week for 4 weeks from 1730-2000 at the Naval Hospital. Topics covered include breathing techniques, comfort measures, pain management, delivery, and newborn care. All classes should be taken during the same month and should be taken after 28 weeks of pregnancy. To register for the classes or for more information call the OB Clinic at 760-830-2227

Budget for Baby – Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society**760-830-6323**

The Budget for Baby Program is a starting point for service members and their families to acquire financial planning skills needed when adding a little one to the family. Attendees must be past 1st trimester and no more than one month post-partum. Classes are held on Wednesdays and Saturdays. For information and to register call 760-830-6323.

New Parent Support Program**Bldg. 1438****760-830-7622**

The New Parent Support Program is a professional team of nurses and social workers who provide supportive and caring services to military families with children ages five and under. The team does this through home visitation services, support groups, parenting and prenatal classes; including Baby Basics. To obtain additional information please call 760-830-7622.

Baby Basics**760-830-7622**

Baby Basics is a fast-paced class that provides information on labor & delivery, postpartum, breast-feeding, and safety for babies from pregnancy to 12 months. The class also emphasizes the father's involvement, and includes interactive demonstrations of basic infant care, such as swaddling, bathing, diapering and soothing a crying baby. The class is provided to expectant parents (both couples and singles). Participants must register prior to attending class. For more information or to register call 760-830-7622.

Women, Infants, Children Program (WIC)**6527 Desert Queen Avenue, Twentynine Palms 92277****800-472-2321****Other Important Resources:****DEERS:** Bldg 1551 Village Center **760-830-7572**

Sponsor must register all eligible family members, so that they can receive TRICARE benefits, this includes newborns. Documents needed: Birth Certificate, Social Security Card, State ID, and Marriage License.

Housing: Bldg 1003 Cottontail Rd. **760-830-6611**

The addition of a newborn can often qualify you for a housing upgrade. Due to the wait list times and the adjustment period after the birth of a baby I suggest contacting housing as early as possible.

Notes & Numbers: